

Ethics & Skills in Buddhist Practice

(*KARANĪYA*) *METTA SUTTA*

(Suttanipāta & Kuddakapātha)

If a person can have a clear vision about the world by listening to Dhamma through the good friendship, he is able to become the path of liberation from all the sufferings. According to the last stanza which is the most important verse of the Metta Sutta, if someone doesn't fall into extremes as eternity belief (*Sassata*) and annihilation belief (*Uccheda*), he meets the middle path which leads to getting rid of suffering.

Diṭṭhiñca anupagamma – Not falling into (wrong) views

silavā dassanena sampanno, Virtuous and endowed with vision (insight)

kamesu vineyya gedham - He discards attachment to sensuous desires

Na hi jātu gabbhaseyyam punaretī - Truly, he does not come again, to be conceived in a womb.

As the result of this path, he is able to become **Anāgāmi** (none returning) position or arahantship in this immediate life itself. Karnīyamettha (Metta) Sutta explains;

1. The Buddhist path to deliverance
2. Ethics in Buddhist path
3. Protective blessing chanting
4. Buddhist meditation path
5. Three disciplines; *Sīla*, *Samādhi* & *Paññā*
6. The way how to overcome fear.

In short, this is **the Buddhist Anthem**, main theme what the Buddha wanted to explain to the world.

The Kaccānagotta Sutta explains; if someone sees the arising of five aggregates, he doesn't go to the extreme of annihilation. Also, if a person sees the cessation of five aggregates, he doesn't go the extreme of eternity. The theory of causality is the vision that helps us to overcome these extremes. Having this vision, we gradually enter the path of emancipation, everlasting happiness, enlightenment, Nibbana.

The gradual path is explained in the Metta Sutta including three trainings those are virtue, concentration and wisdom. First three verses describe fifteen qualities which should be practiced by a person who wishes to attain the peace of mind.

They are;

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| 1. Proficiency/ skillfulness | (<i>Sakko</i>) |
| 2. Honesty | (<i>Ujū</i>) |
| 3. Perfectly upright | (<i>Sūjū</i>) |
| 4. Gently spoken | (<i>Suvaco</i>) |
| 5. Gentle | (<i>Mudu</i>) |
| 6. Humble / not conceited | (<i>Anatimānī</i>) |

7. Being contented / Being satisfied (*Santussako*)
8. Easy to support (*Subharo*)
9. Being less busy (*Appakicco*)
10. Being simple (*Sallahukavutti*)
11. Controlling (Discipline) in senses (*Santindriyo*)
12. Discretion / wisdom (*Nipako*)
13. Not impudence/ not stubborn (*Appagabbho*)
14. Less attachment to families (*kulesu ananugiddho*)
15. Having moral fear and Shame for even slightest wrong conduct
(*Na ca khuddaṃ samacare kiñci - yena viññuū pare upavadeyyuṃ*)

These qualities are included in the first discipline, virtue within the three disciplines of enlightenment in Buddhism. After describing primary qualities that should be practiced on the path of peace, practicing loving kindness is described in the other six verses in the Sutta. With these qualities a person who wishes to attain peace has to practice loving kindness. Practicing loving kindness is one of the main qualities on the path of liberation. Loving kindness in Buddhism is focused on all the levels and sizes as;

- Weak (*Tasā*)
- Strong (*Thāvarā*)
- Without exception (*Anavasesā*)
- Long (*Dīghā*)
- Stout or big (*Mahantā*)
- Medium (*Majjhimā*)
- Short (*Rassa*)
- Small (*Khānuka*)
- Large (*Thūlā*)
- Those seen = visible (*Diṭṭhā*)
- Unseen = invisible = (*Addiṭṭhā*)
- And those dwelling far (*Dūre*)
- Near (*Avidūre*)
- Those who are born (*Bhūtā*)
- Those who are to be born (*Sambhavesī*)

Also, developing **Mettā** thoughts is the best way how to generate positive thought in the mundane level than all other merits according the *Mettācetovimutti Sutta*. People mostly suffer because of anger. To reduce anger, being kind to everyone is an essential need. It also helps us to concentrate our mind. Last verse describes the way to develop wisdom. Having virtue and concentration, the Buddha's disciple should develop wisdom seeing impermanence. When the Buddha's disciple sees the arising of his experience that he receives through senses, he doesn't go to the extreme of annihilation. Also, when he sees the ceasing of experience, he doesn't go to the extreme of externalism. Without going to 'is' or 'isn't' he sees the world reality that is impermanence with the knowledge of the dependence origination. This is the highest knowledge and realization of wisdom that leads to attain enlightenment.

Buddhism has pointed out two paths those are heavenly path (*Sagga Magga*) and the path of deliverance (*Mokkha Magga*). According to the heavenly path, three meritorious deeds (generosity, morality and meditation) should be practiced with the understanding of the Karmic law. By practicing three meritorious deeds, we are able to increase desire and anger, but not completely. As the result of practicing the heavenly path, we can be reborn in a blissful life. According to the deliverance path, we have to practice three disciplines; virtue, concentration and wisdom. At the beginning of the deliverance path, we should have a very clear knowledge about the dependent origination. Here understanding the five aggregates is very important.

Five aggregates are;

- i. The group of forms - (*Rūpa*)
- ii. The group of feelings - (*Vedanā*)
- iii. The group of perception - (*Saññā*)
- iv. The group of mental formations - (*Samkhāra*)
- v. The group of consciousness - (*Viññāna*)

If we have any kind of experience through our six senses such as eye, ear etc, five aggregates arise at the moment. Not only do they arise, but they cease immediately at the same moment. If someone can understand that these five things arise at the moment when conditions are present and they cease instantly when conditions separate, he doesn't go to the extremes as 'there is' or 'there isn't'. When someone sees the arising of the five aggregates, he doesn't go the extreme of 'there isn't' or 'annihilism'. And also, when someone sees ceasing of the five aggregates, he doesn't go the extreme of 'there isn't' or 'eternalism'. If someone is skillful to see this reality, he is clever to understand impermanence. The understanding of impermanence leads to overcome suffering and unsatisfactoriness. Further, he realizes all his experiences arise and cease at the moment. The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and instantly ceases at once. **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not go to (the future) occurrence. (*ahutvā sambutam hutvā na bhavissati*).** It means if we experience something now, that experience didn't come from the past in the same way as now. Also, the present experience doesn't go to the future from the present in the same way. If somebody can understand this reality, he is ready to give up extremes about the past and the future. Also he tries to live in the present moment seeing arising and ceasing wisely with full awareness. However, we shouldn't forget our past or future. We only do not live in the past or future. By practicing mindfulness and wisdom our memory increases and we train our mind to live in the present moment reflecting on arising and ceasing of our all our experiences.

We have to practice above qualities which come in the Metta Sutta with the knowledge of the impermanence of the five aggregates. Then we can go forward on the path of peace of mind. Among all the qualities of the Metta Sutta, three things are very important.

They are;

- Honesty
- Gently spoken (active listening)
- Wisdom

As wise people, we may try to go forward on the spiritual path day by day searching for real happiness. As the result of practicing above four things, other five Spiritual Faculties increase in our life. They are named as the five Spiritual Faculties (*pañca indriya*). They are faith (*Saddhā*), energy (*Viriya*), mindfulness (*Sati*), concentration (*Samādhi*), wisdom (*Paññā*). Meanwhile the Buddha has explained to us that we have to practice only two doctrines, they are mindfulness and wisdom. Ultimately, we have to practice only one which is wisdom. When wisdom is developed correctly as the Buddha said, all other qualities gradually increase. As the result of practicing the path of deliverance, we are able to reduce desire, anger and delusion completely. Also, we can overcome suffering and achieve peace of mind, happiness, satisfactoriness and the bliss of Nibbana.

Real Skills which a person can develop

We can find ourselves whether we are on the path or not by finding out whether these three qualities (loving kindness, honesty and wisdom) gradually increase. Skills are mostly explained in Buddhism focusing on our final goal of deliverance. For that we should be skillful in senses, aggregates and elements. They always arise and cease according to conditions and causes. If we are able to keep our attention in this reality by seeing and reflecting on impermanence, we can overcome suffering and ignorance as well. The final result of practicing all above qualities is having an unshaken mind which is the supreme blessing. That is the real refuge that we can make in our life as the Buddha pointed out with great compassion and wisdom.

Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge; with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.

When you dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge; with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge, the basis itself should be investigated thus: 'From what are sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair born? How are they produced?' (Attadīpa Sutta).

Then we are able to live without defilements among the ordinary people like a lotus flower which doesn't touch mud or water.

Let's live happily without anger among the people those who are angry.

Let's live happily without mental illnesses among the people those who are mentally ill.

Let's live happily without longing sensual pleasure among those who are seeking sensual pleasures.

Let's live happily without any impediments even as the deities of the radiant beings.

As the results of this practice, he or she can develop his or her mind to the maximum level in this life itself. If he didn't attain enlightenment in this life, he or she is able to reborn in a higher realm where he can develop other stages of his spirituality. Accordingly, it is very clear that our real success depends on happiness. Furthermore, happiness depends on the average of reducing

unwholesome thoughts such as craving, anger and delusion. The average of reducing of unwholesome thoughts depend on the duration of practicing mindfulness with correct vision.

The qualities within us can be ordered in below list;

1. Active listening (*Suvaca*)
2. Gratitude (*Kataññu katavedī*)
3. Generosity (*Dāna*)
4. Virtue (*Sīla*)
5. Loving Kindness (*Mettā*)
6. Mindfulness (*Sati*)
7. Wisdom (*Paññā*)

As the result of practicing this path we are able to live with three concentrations.

- i. Animitta Samādhi
- ii. Suññata Samādhi
- iii. Appanihita Samādhi

When someone sees the world wisely, his mind is not fixed anywhere (Animitta).

His mind doesn't fix in anything outside or even inside mind.
He sees the world as an empty village.
He doesn't take anything as essence.

Also, he lives having a pure mind like a lotus flower which origins in mud and comes over it among the ordinary people who associate with defilements. As a person who is on the top of the summit of wisdom, he sees the suffered world.

Having these results by practicing Dhamma in this Buddha Sāsana, as monks and nuns we should dedicate our entire life for the longevity of the Sasana. As Makhadeva Sutta explains we should not be the last persons in this Sāsana. Our duty is to hand over this message to the next generation. For that I wish you all the best.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!
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